

REMARKS

General Comments

Claim 1-17 are all the claims currently pending in the present application.

In the current Office Action, the Examiner acknowledges Applicant's claim of foreign priority and the receipt of the certified copy of the priority document. Further, the Examiner has reviewed and considered the references cited in the Information Disclosure Statements filed July 1 and October 24, 2003.

Specification

The Abstract of the Disclosure stands objected to due to informalities. With the current Amendment, Applicant amends the Abstract of the Disclosure as shown, and submits that the specification is currently in proper form. Therefore, Applicant respectfully requests that the objection to the specification be reconsidered and withdrawn.

With the current Amendment, Applicant amends the specification, as shown, in order to correct informalities. These amendments are for purposes of clarity only. No new matter is added.

Claims 1-17

All of Claims 1-17 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly unpatentable over Nomura, U.S. Patent No. 6,272,125 ("Nomura"), in view of Kakubo et al., JP-03-044115 ("Kakubo").

AMENDMENT UNDER 37 C.F.R. § 1.111

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Regarding this rejection, Applicant submits that the filing date of the present application (May 31, 2000) predates the issue date (August 7, 2001) of Nomura. Thus, Nomura, at best, would only be available as prior art 35 U.S.C. § 103 based on 35 U.S.C. § 102(e).

However, the undersigned hereby represents that Tominari Nomura, the inventor of the Nomura reference is the same person as Tominari Nomura, the inventor of the present application. Thus, the Nomura reference is not a patent or publication "by another" under §102(e), and is therefore not available as prior art against the present invention.

Applicant notes that, with this Amendment, Claims 1 and 13 are amended to correct informalities. Applicant respectfully submits that these amendments are not intended to narrow the scope of the original claims, but are rather for precision of language and to explicitly recite within the claim what was believed to have already been implicitly defined therein. Accordingly, these amendments do not foreclose application of reasonable equivalents.

In view of the above, Applicant respectfully requests that the rejection of Claims 1-17, be reconsidered and withdrawn.

Conclusion

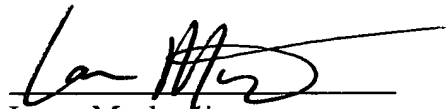
In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned attorney at the telephone number listed below.

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The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,



Laura Moskowitz
Registration No. 55,470

SUGHRUE MION, PLLC
Telephone: (202) 293-7060
Facsimile: (202) 293-7860

WASHINGTON OFFICE

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